

SUBTERRANEA BRITANNICA - 1 JUNE 1984 - NEWSLETTER 1

FROM THE SECRETARY

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DEAR MEMBERS

There are several important matters to bring to your attention.

10th ANNIVERSARY

SUBTERRANEA BRITANNICA was founded in 1974 - very largely through the efforts of our chairman, Sylvia Beamon. This year is, therefore, our tenth anniversary. Our October conference (20th - details in due course) will be a rather special occasion, and we have been fortunate in being able to book Lucy Cavendish College for a longer period than usual, allowing us to continue the meeting and celebrations until 18.00.

RETIREMENT OF SYLVIA BEAMON

Sylvia will be retiring as chairman as from the October AGM - ten years as an officer is long enough, and she will be more than busy seeing her book on ICE-HOUSES through the press - members will be delighted to learn that a publisher has now been found - Routledge & Kegan Paul! Our congratulations go to Sylvia for managing to have a book accepted for publication, on top of being a most efficient chairman, editor, secretary, membership records officer, director of labour and studies at Anstey Castle, and heaven knows what else! If our next chairman (volunteers, please, to the secretary) can manage a tenth of this we shall count ourselves fortunate!

FIELD STUDIES FUND

Our member in Australia, PJ Simpson is not only flying over specially to attend our 10th anniversary year STUDY WEEKEND - EAST KENT (22-24 June) - he has also offered TWENTY-FIVE POUNDS to be applied to some worthwhile purpose. Your committee feel this should be made available to assist any worthwhile field survey or research project likely to lead to the accumulation and deposit, or publication, of useful information. If you have a project under way or in mind and would like to apply for assistance, please write to me - SAE PLEASE!

COMPUTERISATION

As you can see from this circular, SB is now entering the computer age - albeit not yet on its own hardware (or software, come to that!) We now have our membership records computerised, and the next step is to add as full details as possible of members' areas of special knowledge, information requests, and offers to lead underground visits. Thus we hope, at last, to implement the proposed informal INFORMATION EXCHANGE SCHEME and EXCHANGE VISITS SCHEME advertised in the last year or two in the Bulletin. Send in to me your 'information available', 'information requested' and 'visits offered' entries for the records.

What can we tell you? We have on floppy disc at present, or in preparation, datafiles as follows:

MEMBERSHIP LIST - ask for SB - 25p in stamps please

CHANNEL TUNNEL - notes - ask for CHT - 25p in stamps please

SUSSEX MINES - article in preparation - ask for SXM - 50p in stamps please

CHALK MINES & QUARRIES - literature references - ask for CHMQ - 25p in stamps please

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CHALK CAVES - literature references on natural cavities - ask for CHCA - 25p in stamps please

SB FILES - listing of sites, by county/type, for which we have files - ask for SBFILE - 25p in stamps please

AUGUST VISIT TO MAASTRICHT, NETHERLANDS

A SPECIAL EVENT this year is an informal visit to the numerous underground sites in Zuid Limburg (Netherlands) and adjoining parts of Belgium - including the underground stone quarries described in a paper in the bulletin a few years ago.

The provisional programme includes all or some of:

NOORDELIJK GANGENSTELSEL ST. PIETERSBERG - ie non-tourist parts of the Maastricht underground quarries

CAESTERT - Belgian extensions of same

SIBBERGROEVE - with possible viewing of the last subterranean quarrymen still at work

GEULHEMMERGROEVE - with historic 'chapel' and 'cave-houses'

KAZEMATTEN MAASTRICHT - casemates under the City walls

RIJCKHOLT - internationally famous and important Neolithic flint mines - cf Grimes Graves

GEMEENTEGROEVE VALKENBURG - another very extensive underground quarry, with many interesting features including multi-level working - with luck we may gain access to the non-tourist areas here as well as at St. Pietersberg

KANNE and EBEN EMAEL quarries - just over the Belgian border + some of the smaller quarries in Limburg

NATUURHISTORISCH MUSEUM MAASTRICHT - for old films of St. Pietersberg

The whole week (probably approx 4th - 11th August) will be informally run, along traditional SB lines!, by Eef Smitshuysen of Studiegroep Onderaardse Kalksteengroeven. Some limited assistance with 'sleeping-bag places' may be possible - and there is a good camp site just outside the St. Pietersberg Noordelijk Gangenstelsel on the City outskirts. Maastricht itself is an unusually pleasant place, although nearby Valkenburg (the 'Southend' of Holland, though with neither pier nor sea) tends to be full of coachloads of English schoolchildren!

CONTACT ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE if you would like to consider joining this trip. It is evolving out of a 'prospecting' trip for a full-blown study weekend - SAE PLEASE!

FUTURE STUDY WEEKENDS

We are always keen to have ideas - and offers to organise - study weekends. We have already visited Ironbridge, Bristol/Bath, Nottingham, East Surrey, and Dudley - with East Kent later this month.

Offers and ideas, so far, for future weekends include LONDON, SOUTH OF SCOTLAND, EXETER, LANCASHIRE, MAASTRICHT, and possibly CAEN?

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

This year's international conference - to be hosted as usual by our associated group Societe Francaise d'Etude des Souterrains - will be held 7 - 9 July at Chateauponsac, near Limoges - details enclosed.

SEHDACS

The Societe d'Etudes Historiques des Anciennes Carrieres et Cavites Souterrains is based in Paris, and has just sent us issue 4 of its journal LIAISON. As with the Dutch group SOK, all interested in the serious study of underground quarries should keep in touch with what these other groups are doing on the Continent.

LLOYDS BANK GRANT AID and the CHALDON QUARRIES SURVEY

SB has been awarded a further HUNDRED POUNDS from the Lloyds Bank Fund for Independent Archaeologists for surveying these ancient quarries. Good use has been made of the compass, tape, and clinometer purchased with the PREVIOUS HUNDRED POUNDS - current estimates are that about 13,000 metres of the estimated total of 17,000 metres of quarry gallery have now been surveyed and drawn up at 1:500; if you were at the last Cambridge conference you will have seen the extent and quality of this survey. The new grant is being applied to the purchase of access tackle (wire ladder + belay) and for photographic survey. And we have volunteers, professional and/or experienced photographers, to take and process the photographs.

STONE QUARRIES SYMPOSIUM

The Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society is holding a symposium, in Croydon, on 16 March 1985. Although it is intended this should deal mainly with the east Surrey quarries, it is probable that others will feature also, for comparative purposes. Details from / offers of papers to the secretary - SAE PLEASE!

PAUL W SOWAN - SECRETARY

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